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TRINAMOOL SEEKS TO FORGE THIRD FRONT AGAINST BJP

West Bengal's ruling party is looking to forge a non-Congress Opposition in both Parliamentary Houses to take on the BJP

PARTIES NOT ALLIED WITH CONGRESS TARGETED

Sources in the Trinamool, which will skip the joint strategy meeting today of the Opposition for the winter session, said the party is looking to coordinate with others that are not in alliance with the Congress anywhere. The second largest party in Rajya Sabha and the fourth largest in Lok Sabha, TMC said it won't align itself with Congress's floor strategy

'NOBODY IS UNTOUCHABLE FOR US'

- The Trinamool has burnt bridges with the Congress as it has opened its door to rebels so as to realise its national ambition
- "We will reach out to all like-minded parties, whether it is the Samajwadi Party or BJD, for a stronger Opposition front. Nobody is untouchable for us," said a TMC MP | P7

22 MPs

TMC HAS IN LOK SABHA, COMPARED WITH 53 MPs OF CONGRESS

Oppn demands MSP law at all-party meet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH the Opposition making a slew of demands, including a law to guarantee Minimum Support Price for farm produce, at an all-party meeting on Sunday, defence minister and Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha Rajnath Singh told floor leaders that the government is ready for a healthy discussion on all issues in the Winter Session of Parliament.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the meeting a miss, though in the past he had attended them. The meeting is called a day before the Parliament session begins.

Opposition parties indicated they will further pressure the government on farm issues, with some of them expressing concern that the Centre could bring in provisions of the three contentious laws that are up for repeal in a different form.

Making it clear that the Opposition parties will take up the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, floor leaders pressed for the sacking of Union minister Ajay Mishra whose son is the prime accused in the violence.

Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjuna Kharge demanded a law to guarantee MSP. He also said the government should give financial compensation to victims of Covid-19 as well as the farm agitation.

V Vijaysai Reddy of the YSR Congress demanded the expansion of the MSP basket to cover marine and poultry products. He also sought caste census.

Landslide BJP win in Tripura civic polls

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

THE ruling BJP in Tripura swept the civic elections on Sunday, capturing power in all 20 urban local bodies (ULBs).

The elections were held against the backdrop of sporadic incidents of political violence. The CPI(M) and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) had accused the BJP of assault and intimidation of their workers.

Of the total 334 seats, the BJP won 329. It had won 112 seats in seven ULBs unopposed earlier. Three seats went to the CPI(M) and one each to the TMC and the TIPRA Motha.

That the BJP was serious about the polls was evident from Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking to Twitter to congratulate people and party workers on the success.

The TMC was optimistic about its success in the Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC) but the BJP won all its 51 seats. "People of Agartala have shown abundant confidence in the double engine government led by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @Narendra Modi ji," Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb tweeted.

The TMC had viewed the polls as its launch pad to make inroads into the Bengali-majority state. Its defeat comes days after it became Meghalaya's main opposition through a political coup that saw 12 of the 17 Congress MLAs defecting to it.

TMC's Abhishek Banerjee said it was exceptional for a party with negligible presence to get over 20% vote share in the polls.

State wants Centre to ban passengers from S Africa

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

WITH fears of the Omicron variant of Covid looming, the state government has requested the Centre to impose a travel ban on passengers coming from South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday said that the state could announce any restrictions on Christmas and New Year celebrations after watching the Covid situation.

"A new strain of Covid has surfaced abroad, which is mainly seen in South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana. European nations have imposed restrictions and World Health Organisation too has raised an alarm," Bommai said.

Reiterating that there are no Omicron cases in the state, he said action is being taken to contain the spurt of Covid clusters.

It is noticed that most of these cases are among paramedical staff and students arriving from Kerala, he added.

"To contain the spread, strict surveillance, including testing and seeking RTPCR negative reports, is being followed in Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu Chamarajanagar and Mysuru districts bordering Kerala. Those arriving from Kerala will be allowed only with an RTPCR negative report. It is also mandatory for them to have a double dose of vaccination," he said.

CONTINUED ON: P3

A healthcare worker collects swab samples for Covid testing at a government school in Bengaluru on Sunday | ASHISHANK BHIMANA RAO

NATION WIDE	NOV 27	NOV 28
Fresh cases	8,318	8,774
Recoveries	10,967	9,481
Deaths	465	621

KARNATAKA	NOV 27	NOV 28
Fresh cases	322	315
Recoveries	176	236
Deaths	3	2

Test norms for fliers revised

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH the highly infectious Omicron variant of the coronavirus being detected in at least two more countries on Sunday, the Centre decided to review its decision on resuming commercial foreign flights. Before Omicron surfaced, it had reportedly planned to resume full international travel from December 15.

And now, new guidelines from the health ministry state that passengers travelling from or transiting through "at risk" countries will have to take a RT-PCR test on arrival in India and will be required to wait for the results before leaving the airport or taking a connecting flight. Five per cent of travellers from other countries in each flight will be randomly tested at the airport.

The "at-risk" countries are European nations, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel.

On Sunday, in an urgent meeting chaired by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, the government issued a slew of directions to states for ramping up testing-surveillance measures and health facilities, asking them to focus on intensive containment, monitoring of hot spots and increasing vaccination coverage. The meeting follows a high-level review by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

For their part, states began to retighten Covid restrictions and trace people who arrived from abroad, especially from 'at risk' nations, in the last one month.

Though no Omicron cases have been recorded in India yet, confirmed or suspected cases have emerged in Europe, Israel and Hong Kong — just days after it was first detected in South Africa. The Netherlands confirmed 13 cases, Australia two and the UK one on Sunday.

In drastic moves, Israel barred entry to foreigners and Morocco suspended all incoming air travel. P12

Catching the bug in time

South Africa didn't wait for gene sequencing to spot the variant, as it used a RT-PCR test with a gene kit that can show a result of a undetectable S-gene target — a marker for Omicron. India doesn't have the kit yet, but it can begin manufacturing quickly, says scientist Anurag Agrawal | P7

Cops use spade to remove remains of man on road

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a horrific hit-and-run case, the body of a man who was fatally knocked down by a speeding vehicle on Nelamangala Highway was run over by several vehicles on Sunday. The body had been crushed to such an extent that the police had to use a spade to remove the remains from the road. They could only recover the victim's trousers, patches of skin and one ear that was intact.

The traffic police said that the accident near Rayarapalya might have occurred in the early hours of Sunday and the drivers did not notice the body on the road as it was dark. The headlights could only pick up disheveled clothes as the body had been crushed beyond recognition, they added.

The stretch of highway where the accident occurred lacks adequate streetlights for about 2 km and there are no CCTV cameras installed too. P5

EXPRESS READ

A year later, 2 Covid victims' bodies lie in morgue, forgotten

BENGALURU: In a shocking case of negligence, two bodies of Covid-19 victims were found in the mortuary of ESI Hospital, Rajajinagar, more than a year after the deaths took place. Muniraju (62) from KP Agrahara and Durga (40) from Chamarajpet had succumbed to the virus, and their bodies were stored in the old mortuary freezer since July 2020 | P3

Faruqui's show cancelled after B'luru police letter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Bengaluru city police denied permission to a show by stand-up comedian **Munawar Faruqui**, triggering a controversy. While Faruqui hinted that he would quit holding his shows, the police defended their action, saying they only gave a "suggestion" to the organisers to call off the show and did not "force" them to do so.

The show – 'Dongri to Nowhere' – by Gujarat-based Faruqui was scheduled to be held at Good Shepherd's auditorium on Museum Road at 5 pm on Sunday. Over 600 tickets had been sold.

But the Hindu Janajagruthi Samiti wrote to Bengaluru Police Commissioner Kamal Pant on Saturday, seeking cancellation of the show, alleging that Faruqui has a history of hurting the sentiments of Hindus by making derogatory remarks against Hindu religion, deities and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The right-wing organisation had also threatened to stage protests if permission was granted.

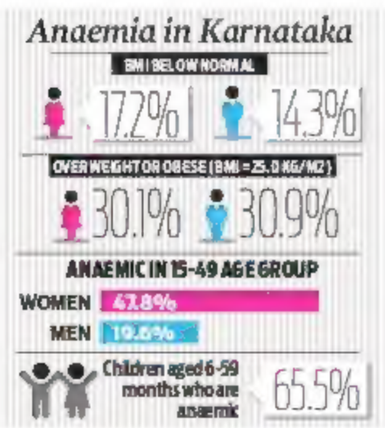
Later on Saturday, Ashoknagar Police Inspector Mallesh B Bolethin, under whose jurisdiction the venue falls, wrote to the organisers — Vishesh Dhuria and Sidharth Das of New Delhi-based Curtain Call Events — suggesting that they cancel the show. CONTINUED ON: P2, CE: P1

DOWNPOUR DEVASTATION

The Cooum river overflows and blocks the road near Maduravoyal, following heavy rain, in Chennai on Sunday | MATHIVANAN | P5

HEALTH RISK

Number of anaemic kids, women up in last 5 yrs



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

NOTWITHSTANDING numerous initiatives to provide nutritious food, anaemia continues to be a major health problem among women and children in Karnataka. In fact, the numbers went up in the last few years to a high of 48% among women and 66% among children aged 6 to 59 months.

The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 shows an increase of 3 per cent among women and 5 per cent among children, compared to the last NFHS-4 survey in 2015-16.

While better access to healthcare facilities could be one of the reasons for the increase in the numbers, it is a serious cause of concern. "In children, it can cause stunting and make them more prone to other infections," said Dr Sylvia Karpagam, public health doctor and researcher. "It can also affect concentration among children. If it is more predominant among Adivasi and Dalit children, who have already been labelled as slow learners, it can lead to a huge consequence as they cannot concentrate and start with a disadvantage," she said. As many as 67.1% of rural children are anaemic compared to 62.8% in urban areas. P5

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